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TRAINING CITY BOYS FOR COUNTRY LIFE

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The Gardena Agricultural High School belongs to the Los Angeles city system. It lies outside the city limits proper, in a district annexed to the city for school purposes only. It is in the heart of the most important poultry district of southern California. Dairying, fruit-growing, and the production of alfalfa and barley are carried on in the immediate vicinity of the school, while four miles to the east sugar-beet growing is the dominant industry. The school is therefore so located that it can and does keep its students in touch with diversified farming operations. But it is close to the city of Los Angeles. Electric cars, passing the doors of the school every half-hour, reach the center of the city in thirty-five minutes. All these conditions have made it possible for the Gardena Agricultural High School to perform a function more or less unique among schools of this type—the training of city boys for country life.

It may be of interest to note in passing that the school is an intermediate school as well as a high school, and a cosmopolitan school as well as an agricultural one. More than two hundred students are enrolled in grades nine to twelve. Of these, sixty boys are enrolled in the course in agriculture. Of the sixty, but fourteen are boys who have been reared in the country. In addition to these boys, others not in the agricultural course are electing agricultural subjects.

Agricultural instruction has been offered in the school since 1908. It was introduced at a time when the school had a total enrolment of only sixty pupils, and but one instructor was needed for both agriculture and the biological sciences. In 1910 the Board of Education purchased a ten-acre tract adjoining the school and utilized it as a school farm. A farmer was employed and placed in charge.

In 1911 it was found necessary to employ a second teacher of agriculture. At the present time, in its corps of twenty teachers, the school employs two teachers of agriculture, one teacher of biological sciences, and a fourth man, certificated as a teacher of farm practice, who has charge of the school farm and the dormitory.

The school farm and the grounds about the school buildings are very necessary tools of agricultural instruction. While the Massachusetts home-project idea is doubtless the ideal system for a school whose pupils are drawn for the most part from farm homes, the special circumstances here largely preclude the use of home projects. The problem of teaching the art of farming through experience must be solved here by utilizing as effectively as possible the land owned by the school, since the city boys who come to us have no other opportunity of securing practical experience.

The school farm includes about ten acres. The grounds around the school have until this year included about four acres more; and a tract of four and one-half acres has just been added, part of which will be used for agricultural purposes. Since irrigation is necessary in California, the school owns a share in a pumping plant, and water is conveyed to all parts of the land by a cement pipe line. On a part of the farm students have planted and are caring for a young orchard of several varieties of fruit trees, a vineyard, an alfalfa field, etc. The farm is at present stocked with five head of cattle, all registered stock, an excellent team of horses, about two hundred hens, and half a dozen registered pigs. The farm buildings comprise a good-sized barn, a dairy building, a garage, a poultry-house, and a wagon shed, in addition to the dwelling-house. All these buildings except the house were erected by the students in the carpentry classes; two carpenters, however, worked with the students in the construction of the barn.

The work of the farm is performed altogether by students. Part is performed by students working in regular class periods, and the rest outside of class hours by students who live at the farmhouse, which was last year converted into a dormitory. The most effective utilization of the school farm for purposes of instruction has been and still is the subject of some experiment. During one year, for example, individual plots were assigned to the students

in certain classes, who were expected to conduct on them independent farming operations in miniature. A system of cost-account keeping was devised by the instructor in charge, and was used by each student. Theoretically, the plan was attractive. Practically, the results were disappointing, for reasons which it is unnecessary to detail here, and at the close of the year the plan was abandoned. The work of the farm is now conducted on the group system, and this arrangement, together with the dormitory system now in operation, is proving very satisfactory.

The dormitory system was initiated by the man who was at that time head of the department of agriculture, as a means of meeting the needs of city boys who are without farm experience. It has been in effect for a year and has proved itself an admirable instrument for the purpose intended. During the summer of 1914 the farmhouse was so remodeled as to provide three additional sleeping-rooms. The farmer was released, the head of the agricultural department himself moving to the farmhouse. At the opening of school in September, four city boys, students in their twelfth year, were chosen to occupy the dormitory. The school gives them room and board, and in return they do some of the work of the farm before and after the regular school hours. Their work consists largely of "chores," caring for the animals, milking, caring for the milk, keeping the farm premises neat, and doing odds and ends of work that the day students in the agricultural courses do not perform. These boys are at work in the morning at 5:30, and finish at dusk. The experiences they get, familiar enough to every farm-bred boy, are to them entirely novel. The plan is an ideal one from the standpoint of vocational guidance; its advantages from other standpoints are equally apparent. By changing boys every three months, twelve boys are enabled to share in this sort of experience every year. It is planned to increase the dormitory facilities in the near future, so that at least six boys at a time may occupy quarters there.

The classrooms and laboratories of the school are ample for present needs. There is a laboratory for chemistry and physics, and a biology laboratory; a large shop building of brick construction, equipped with wood-working machinery, benches, and tools;

a forge-shop, equipped with twelve hand-blown forges of the best type (Buffalo No. 666), a hand-power drill press, and a motor-driven grinder. The superintendent of schools and the Board of Education have been generous in their support of the school, and ample equipment has been available at all times.

The course of study and the schedule of recitations have been organized with due regard to the fact that the majority of the boys in the agricultural course are city boys without farm experience. In the ninth year, plant propagation and farm-building construction are the agricultural courses offered. The former comprises methods of propagating ornamental and useful plants; the control of plant diseases and insect pests; elementary landscape gardening; elementary irrigation practice; greenhouse, lathhouse, hotbed, and cold-frame work, and other related matters. The classes in plant propagation take complete charge of all the ornamental plants on the school premises, and they grow the vegetables which supply the school cafeteria. They also propagate some nursery stock for sale.

The course in farm-building construction includes carpentry, cement work, pipe-fitting, and elementary architectural drawing. The small buildings about the school and farm are all erected by these classes; the cement work about the school premises is done by them; and they are called upon for such miscellaneous work as the repair of buildings, the construction of scenery for the auditorium stage, etc.

The current practice in most schools is to offer such work as this in double-period courses, and to offer them daily. By the arrangement in effect at Gardena, the work in plant propagation extends without interruption throughout a school day. On the following day the same class spends a full half-day in the work of the course in farm-building constructing. This departure from the ordinary arrangement has been found to result in an economy of time, an increased amount of work accomplished during the year, a greater development of skill on the part of the pupils, and increased satisfaction in doing the work on the part of both instructors and pupils. The same plan is being followed with the agricultural subjects of the tenth year (dairying and poultry being alternated with farm

blacksmithing), and in the eleventh year where the same group of students take horticulture and agronomy on alternate days.

The course of study in agriculture in this high school follows:

NINTH YEAR	ELEVENTH YEAR
English	American History and Civics
Plant Propagation	Agronomy
Farm-Building Construction	Horticulture
Botany	Agricultural Physics
Farm Arithmetic or Algebra	
TENTH YEAR	TWELFTH YEAR
English	Animal Husbandry
Poultry and Dairying	Principles of Breeding
Farm Blacksmithing	Rural Law and Economics
Zoölogy	Chemistry

This course is subject to modification for those boys who need to meet the entrance requirements of particular colleges.

The course in household economics offered by the school is in a sense a complement of the course in agriculture. In this department the girls serve the school as loyally and enthusiastically as do the boys in the agricultural course. The cooking for the school cafeteria, the materials for which are largely produced on the farm by the boys, is all done by the girls of the cooking classes. The food thus prepared is sold at a nominal cost to the students.

The school has not been in operation long enough to determine the vocational destinies of the graduates of its agricultural course. Some of them are at work on ranches; the majority, it is safe to say, are in agricultural colleges, or are recent graduates from such colleges. The school has established itself, has proved its worth, and is meeting with a growth in numbers, both in the agricultural course and in other courses, which is very gratifying to those who are interested in its welfare.